

Opportunity Is Knocking. We Need to Answer.

■ Steve Sellars

Over the past year, I've written about telling our story, strengthening our voice, proving our value, and, most recently, Urgent Care's evolution from a convenient alternative to an essential part of everyday healthcare. As I look at where we stand today, I believe we're entering another important chapter.

Healthcare is changing rapidly, and nearly every trend points in the same direction. Primary care physicians are retiring faster than they can be replaced. New physicians aren't entering primary care in sufficient numbers to close the gap. Patients are waiting weeks, and sometimes months, for appointments. At the same time, employers continue searching for better ways to provide affordable, high-quality healthcare for their workforce while healthcare costs continue to rise. These aren't isolated challenges. Together, they're reshaping how patients access care.

Every day, more than half a million patients choose Urgent Care because we're accessible, convenient, affordable, and trusted. Our clinicians diagnose illnesses, treat injuries, provide occupational health services, perform diagnostic testing, and help patients navigate an increasingly complex healthcare system with quality, efficiency, and compassion.

Increasingly, Urgent Care has become the front door to everyday healthcare.

Healthcare's Front Door

This concept was reinforced during The Urgent Care Association (UCA) Assembly in Washington, D.C., where clinical and executive leaders came together to discuss the future of our field. Throughout those conversations, one message surfaced repeatedly: Healthcare needs Urgent Care more than ever, but we must continue helping poli-

cymakers, employers, payers, and the public better understand the value we bring to the healthcare system.

The release of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' proposed 2027 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule only strengthened that conviction. While we were disappointed that the proposal did not recognize the enhanced role Urgent Care can play in caring for Medicare beneficiaries, it reminded us that meaningful policy change requires persistence, credible data, strong relationships, and a field willing to speak with one voice.

The same is true beyond Washington.

UCA is expanding its work with employer coalitions and other healthcare stakeholders because employers are looking for more than lower costs. They're searching for partners who can improve access, reduce unnecessary emergency department utilization, keep employees healthy, and help people return to work more quickly. Those are the needs Urgent Care is uniquely positioned to meet.

Stay Engaged

You may be asking, "What can I do?" The answer is simple: Stay engaged, share your stories, and participate in the conversations shaping our future. We may compete in our local markets, but we're united by the common purpose of strengthening Urgent Care for the benefit of our patients, our communities, and our profession.

No single organization can accomplish this alone. UCA exists to convene our field, amplify our collective voices, and ensure Urgent Care is represented where important decisions are being made. The more engaged we are, the greater our influence and the stronger our future.

I've never been more optimistic about where Urgent Care is headed. The need has never been greater, and neither has the opportunity. Now is the time to join forces, shape the future together, and ensure Urgent Care continues earning its place as the front door to everyday healthcare. ■



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